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09/941,142	08/28/2001	Jeffrey Meng Wah Chan	P-2628 CNT	7123

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EXAMINER

HUISMAN, DAVID J

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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2183

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05/27/2008

PAPER

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Office Action Summary	Application No. 09/941,142	Applicant(s) WAH CHAN ET AL.	
	Examiner DAVID J. HUISMAN	Art Unit 2183	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 04 March 2008.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 21-23,25-35,37-47 and 49-58 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 21-23,25-35,37-47 and 49-58 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 28 August 2001 is/are: a) ☒ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413) |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application |
| Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

DETAILED ACTION

1. Claims 21-23, 25-35, 37-47, and 49-58 have been examined.

Papers Submitted

2. It is hereby acknowledged that the following papers have been received and placed of record in the file: RCE and Amendment as received on 3/4/2008.

Continued Examination Under 37 CFR 1.114

3. A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on March 4, 2008, has been entered.

Claim Objections

4. Claim 56 is objected to because of the following informalities: In the paragraph beginning with "dispatching...", line 4, it is not clear what is "indicated". That is, the claim language is grammatically incorrect. Appropriate correction is required.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

5. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

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A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

6. Claims 42 and 56-58 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Konigsfeld et al., U.S. Patent No. 5,420,991 (herein referred to as Konigsfeld).

7. Referring to claim 42, Konigsfeld has taught a processor adapted to:

a) speculatively dispatch a load operation to a cache unit and determining, following said speculative dispatch, whether read-after-write hazards associated with the load operation are present based on information in a read-after-write field in a load buffer for said load operation wherein each bit in said read-after-write hazard field corresponds to an entry in a store buffer. See the abstract. Note that a load, which occurs after a store, when speculatively executed past the store, causes a RAW hazard which is ultimately detected by snooping/examining an entry in the load buffer for that load. Note that the determination as to whether a hazard is present is based on information in a tag field (column 4, lines 22-30). This tag field comprises bits which make up a store buffer ID of a store instruction previous to it. Hence, each bit in the ID corresponds to the entry in the store buffer holding the store having the ID.

b) handle a datum from the cache unit for the speculatively dispatched load operation based, at least in part, on the determining. See the abstract and column 8, lines 4-16, and note that when a conflicting store is encountered (hazard occurs), the load has improperly executed, and consequently, the load is canceled (and the data it loaded is discarded). If a hazard does not exist, then the data was properly loaded and may be used by a subsequent instruction.

8. Referring to claim 56, Konigsfeld has taught a method of locking a resource in a processor, the method comprising:

a) dispatching for speculative execution a load operation prior to determining whether a read-after-write hazard exists between the load operation and a store operation indicated in a read-after-write hazard field in a load wherein each bit in said read-after-write hazard field corresponds to an entry in a store buffer. See the abstract and column 4, lines 22-30. Note that the determination as to whether a hazard is present is based on information in a tag field. This tag field comprises bits which make up a store buffer ID of a store instruction previous to it. Hence, each bit in the ID corresponds to the entry in the store buffer holding the store having the ID.

b) locking a resource of the load operation incident with execution of the load operation. See column 6, line 66, to column 7, line 24, and column 8, lines 4-16. Note that a resource is locked (while a store is occurring, a load from the same resource cannot occur), where the resource is related to execution of a load.

c) determining whether the read-after-write hazard exists based on information in said read-after-write hazard field in said load buffer for said load operation and handling a datum returned for the load operation based, at least in part, on the determining. See column 4, lines 22-30, and Fig.5. Also see the abstract and column 8, lines 4-16, and note that when a conflicting store is encountered (hazard occurs), the load has improperly executed, and consequently, the load is canceled (and the data it loaded is discarded). If a hazard does not exist, then the data was properly loaded and may be used by a subsequent instruction.

9. Referring to claim 57, Konigsfeld has taught a method as described in claim 57. Konigsfeld has further taught discarding the datum if it is determined the read-after-write hazard exists. See the abstract and column 8, lines 4-16.

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10. Referring to claim 58, Konigsfeld has taught a method as described in claim 56.

Konigsfeld has further taught unlocking the resource after the datum is returned. See column 7, lines 4-7, and note that the resource is unlocked when instruction W2 is performed. Column 8, lines 4-16, show an example where W2 is performed after R2, which is the instruction that returns the data (loads it). Consequently, unlocking occurs after returning data.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

11. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

12. Claims 21-23, 25-35, 37-47, 49-56, and 58 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Barlow, U.S. Patent Number 5,168,564 (herein referred to as Barlow) in view of Konigsfeld.

13. Referring to claims 21, 32, and 45 Barlow has taught a method comprising:

a) locking a resource to be accessed by execution of a first instruction in an instruction pipeline.

See Barlow, column 1, lines 50-61, column 2, lines 40-64, and column 5, lines 13-14.

b) determining, after said locking, whether a read-after-write hazard exists between an accessing portion of the first instruction, when executed in said instruction pipeline, and a portion of a second instruction based, at least in part, on order of the first instruction with respect to the second instruction. Again, see Barlow, column 1, lines 50-61, and column 2, lines 40-64, and

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note that the locking is performed in order to remedy any hazard associated with a second instruction's access a resource also being accessed by a first instruction during execution.

c) Barlow has not taught speculative execution of a first instruction. However, the examiner asserts that speculative execution and its advantages are well known and accepted in the art. Speculative execution of instructions reduces the cost (in cycle time) of conditional branch instructions because the processor may predict which way the system will branch (before the branch is actually resolved), and begin speculative execution along the predicted path. If the processor turns out to be correct, then no time was wasted in resolving the branch. Hence, speculative execution is an optimization technique. As a result, in order to further optimize the processor of Barlow, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to modify Barlow such that the first instruction is speculatively executed.

d) Barlow has further not taught that the order of the first instruction with respect to the second instruction is indicated in a read-after-write hazard field for said first instruction in a buffer of a load/store unit of a processor including said instruction pipeline wherein each bit in said read-after-write hazard field corresponds to an entry in a store buffer. However, Konigsfeld has taught such a concept. See the abstract and column 4, lines 22-30. Note that a load, which occurs after a store, when speculatively executed past the store, causes a RAW hazard which is ultimately detected by snooping/examining an entry in the load buffer for that load. Note that the determination as to whether a hazard is present is based on information in a tag field. This tag field comprises bits which make up a store buffer ID of a store instruction previous to it. Hence, each bit in the ID corresponds to the entry in the store buffer holding the store having the ID. A load/store unit is known to be advantageous at least because it buffers outstanding

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load/stores in order to prevent pipeline stalling. Consequently, in order to prevent pipeline stalling while ensuring proper RAW hazard treatment, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to modify Barlow such that the order of the first instruction with respect to the second instruction is indicated in a read-after-write hazard field for said first instruction in a buffer of a load/store unit of a processor including said instruction pipeline wherein each bit in said read-after-write hazard field corresponds to an entry in a store buffer.

14. Referring to claims 22, 34, and 46, Barlow in view of Konigsfeld has taught wherein the locking is performed prior to the first instruction entering a trap stage of said instruction pipeline (Barlow column 7 line 60-column 8 line 3, figure 4a, column 5 lines 9-18; the fault, which is the same thing as a trap, or exception, causes the cancel command, but this is after the lock has already occurred). It should be realized that a trap stage could be any point within the processing of the instruction in which a fault is fixed. Clearly, if a resource is already locked, and it needs to be unlocked (column 9, lines 35-36), then the locking is performed before the error is fixed in a "trap stage".

15. Referring to claims 23, 35 and 47, Barlow in view of Konigsfeld has taught wherein the first instruction is an atomic instruction including a portion to lock the resource and a portion to unlock the resource (Barlow column 1 lines 50-61, and column 8, lines 4-6; the resource is locked at the read portion and reset after the write portion of the operation).

16. Referring to claims 25, 37, and 49, Barlow in view of Konigsfeld has taught wherein the locking includes: locking the resource during an effective address calculation stage of said

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instruction pipeline (Barlow column 4 lines 35-51, column 5 lines 9-19). Clearly, before a resource is locked, its location must be determined.

17. Referring to claims 26, 38, and 50, Barlow in view of Konigsfeld has taught wherein the locking includes locking at least a portion of a cache (Barlow column 5 lines 26-40, column 9 line 53-column 10 line 16).

18. Referring to claims 27, 39, and 51, Barlow in view of Konigsfeld has taught wherein the locking includes locking at least one memory address (Barlow column 5 lines 26-40, column 9 line 53-column 10 line 16; every entry in the cache is a memory address).

19. Referring to claims 28, 40, and 52, Barlow in view of Konigsfeld has taught further comprising unlocking the resource no later than a time at which the first instruction exits said instruction pipeline, regardless of whether the first instruction is cancelled (Barlow column 1 lines 50-61; the resource is locked at the read portion and reset after the write portion of the operation - after the write portion of the operation, the process is complete and therefore leave the pipeline). Clearly, when an instruction leaves the pipeline, all processing corresponding to that instruction will have been finished. Therefore, if an instruction specifies unlocking, then unlocking will have to occur before the instruction leaves the pipeline (completes).

20. Referring to claims 29 and 53, Barlow in view of Konigsfeld has taught wherein said unlocking the resource includes:

unlocking the resource in the normal course of executing the first instruction (Barlow column 1 lines 50-61; the resource is locked at the read portion and reset after the write portion of the operation – after the write portion of the operation, the process is complete and therefore leave the pipeline).

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21. Referring to claims 30, 41, and 54, Barlow in view of Konigsfeld has taught wherein said unlocking the resource includes preventing a write portion of the first instruction from altering information held in at least a portion of the resource (Barlow column 2 lines 40-64 – the other resources are not affected).

22. Referring to claims 31 and 55, Barlow in view of Konigsfeld has taught wherein said preventing a write portion from altering information includes suppressing writing a value to an architectural storage location (Barlow column 2 lines 40-64; since the operation is being canceled, there will be no write-back to the registers).

23. Referring to claim 33, Barlow in view of Konigsfeld has taught further comprising a plurality of processing cores, wherein respective processing cores are adapted to lock the resource in response to respective accesses by respective first instructions prior to determining whether said read-after-write hazard exists between the respective accesses and the second instruction (Barlow column 9 lines 3-26; multiple cores have access to the same resource).

24. Referring to claim 42 Barlow has taught a processor adapted to:

a) speculatively dispatch a load operation to a cache and determine, following said speculative dispatch, whether read-after-write hazards associated with the load operation are present. See Barlow column 1, lines 50-61, and column 2, lines 40-64. Note that RAW hazards are checked for because the first instruction is to write before the second instruction reads a location. Since the lock occurs prior to determination of a hazard, the instruction has experienced “speculative dispatch” since the instruction speculatively locks the resource.

b) handle a datum from the cache unit for the speculatively dispatched load operation based, at least in part, on the determining. For a subsequent instruction seeking to access the same data as

the load instruction, the data can be handled in one of two ways. If a hazard exists, then that data is not made available to the second instruction until the first read-modify-write (RMW) instruction (which includes the load) is finished with it. If there is no hazard (i.e., the second instruction does not need to use the data while the first RMW is operating on it), then the data will be made available to the second instruction. See column 1, lines 50-61.

c) Barlow has not taught determining whether hazards are present based on information in a read-after-write hazard field in a load buffer for said load operation wherein each bit in said read-after-write hazard field corresponds to an entry in a store buffer. However, Konigsfeld has taught such a concept. See the abstract and column 4, lines 22-30. Note that a load, which occurs after a store, when speculatively executed past the store, causes a RAW hazard which is ultimately detected by snooping/examining an entry in the load buffer for that load. Note that the determination as to whether a hazard is present is based on information in a tag field. This tag field comprises bits which make up a store buffer ID of a store instruction previous to it. Hence, each bit in the ID corresponds to the entry in the store buffer holding the store having the ID. A load/store unit is known to be advantageous at least because it buffers outstanding load/stores in order to prevent pipeline stalling. Consequently, in order to prevent pipeline stalling while ensuring proper RAW hazard treatment, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to modify Barlow such that Barlow determines whether hazards are present based on information in a read-after-write hazard field in a load buffer for said load operation wherein each bit in said read-after-write hazard field corresponds to an entry in a store buffer.

25. Referring to claim 43, Barlow in view of Konigsfeld has taught the processor of claim 42 wherein the processor is adapted to lock a resource associated with the load operation concurrently with dispatching the load operation (Barlow column 1 lines 50-61, column 2 lines 40-64; the lock indicator, or mechanism can be canceled after it is set once it is determined that the command using the resource that is locked is invalid, therefore the resource is being locked before the command has been determined to have hazards, and before the command is known to go until completion, which goes along with the definition of prior to a determination of a hazard in the instant application at page 2 line 23-page 3 line 4 – the first portion of a read modify write is a read from memory, which is the same as a load type instruction – the resource is locked during the read portion).

26. Referring to claim 44, Barlow in view of Konigsfeld has taught the processor of claim 43 wherein the processor is further adapted to unlock the resource associated with the load operation no later than a time at which an instruction implementing the load operation exits an instruction pipeline, regardless of whether the instruction is cancelled before exiting the instruction pipeline (Barlow column 1 lines 50-61; the resource is locked at the read portion and reset after the write portion of the operation – after the write portion of the operation, the process is complete and therefore leave the pipeline).

27. Referring to claim 56, Barlow has taught a method of locking a resource in a processor, the method comprising:

a) dispatching for execution a load operation prior to determining whether a read-after-write hazard exists between the load operation and a store operation indicated in a buffer. See column 1 lines 50-61, column 2 lines 40-64; the lock indicator, or mechanism, can be canceled after

being set once it is determined that the command using the resource that is locked is invalid, therefore the resource is being locked before the command has been determined to have hazards, and before the command is known to go until completion, which goes along with the definition of prior to a determination of a hazard in the instant application at page 2 line 23-page 3 line 4. In order to detect a hazard between two instructions, a first instruction must be dispatched and executed. The first RMW instruction includes a load, (i.e., read). The second instruction includes a store (i.e., a write). So, in order to determine if the second RMW conflicts with the first, the first must be dispatched. Also, instructions are inherently stored in some buffer before dispatch.

b) locking a resource of the load operation incident with execution of the load operation. See column 1, lines 50-61, and column 2, lines 40-64.

c) determining whether the read-after-write hazard exists and handling a datum returned for the load operation based, at least in part, on the determining. For a subsequent instruction seeking to access the same data as the load instruction, the data can be handled in one of two ways. If a hazard exists, then that data is not made available to the second instruction until the first read-modify-write (RMW) instruction (which includes the load) is finished with it. If there is no hazard (i.e., the second instruction does not need to use the data while the first RMW is operating on it), then the data will be made available to the second RMW. See column 1, lines 50-61.

d) Barlow has not taught speculative execution of a load operation. However, the examiner asserts that speculative execution and its advantages are well known and accepted in the art. Speculative execution of instructions reduces the cost (in cycle time) of conditional branch instructions because the processor may predict which way the system will branch (before the

branch is actually resolved), and begin speculative execution along the predicted path. If the processor turns out to be correct, then no time was wasted in resolving the branch. Hence, speculative execution is an optimization technique. As a result, in order to further optimize the processor of Barlow, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to modify Barlow such that the load operation is speculatively executed.

e) Barlow has not taught "...indicated in a read-after-write hazard field in a load buffer wherein each bit in said read-after-write hazard field corresponds to an entry in a store buffer", and determining whether the read-after-write hazard exists based on information in said read-after-write hazard field in said load buffer for said load operation. However, Konigsfeld has taught such a concept. See the abstract and column 4, lines 22-30. Note that a load, which occurs after a store, when speculatively executed past the store, causes a RAW hazard which is ultimately detected by snooping/examining an entry in the load buffer for that load. Note that the determination as to whether a hazard is present is based on information in a tag field. This tag field comprises bits which make up a store buffer ID of a store instruction previous to it. Hence, each bit in the ID corresponds to the entry in the store buffer holding the store having the ID. A load/store unit is known to be advantageous at least because it buffers outstanding load/stores in order to prevent pipeline stalling. Consequently, in order to prevent pipeline stalling while ensuring proper RAW hazard treatment, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to modify Barlow such that Barlow includes "...indicated in a read-after-write hazard field in a load buffer wherein each bit in said read-after-write hazard field corresponds to an entry in a store buffer", and determining whether the read-after-write hazard

exists based on information in said read-after-write hazard field in said load buffer for said load operation

28. Referring to claim 58, Barlow in view of Konigsfeld has taught a method as described in claim 56. Barlow has further taught unlocking the resource after the datum is returned. See column 1, lines 53-57. After the datum is modified and returned to the cache, the lock is reset (unlocked).

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to DAVID J. HUISMAN whose telephone number is (571)272-4168. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday (8:00-4:30).

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Eddie Chan can be reached on (571) 272-4162. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

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/David J. Huisman/
Primary Examiner, Art Unit 2183
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